

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BALANCING THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office announced that they anticipate we will have an \$8 billion surplus in this fiscal year. This is a remarkable announcement. It is an historic announcement.

We have waited for over 30 years for the good news that the budget would, at long last, be balanced. However, as important and as significant as this may be, I urge that we not celebrate excessively. Why is this? It is because we still have a great deal of heavy lifting to do.

The announcement does not recognize the tragic condition that we face as a Nation with respect to our fiscal affairs. First, it does not recognize that we continue to operate on a consolidated Federal budget or unified Federal budget which rolls all trust fund operations into the bottom line.

As a consequence, it glosses over the fact that we are borrowing \$100 billion

in fiscal 1998 from the Social Security Trust Fund because that Trust Fund is running a surplus. It is running a surplus because the baby-boom generation is in its peak earning years, and it is contributing at the maximum level, and it is not drawing out.

So in reality, if we would discount this subsidy to the operating budget from the Social Security Trust Funds, we would not have an \$8 billion surplus. Instead, we would have a \$92 billion deficit.

We have some heavy lifting to do to overcome this \$92 billion deficit that remains. That is one reason we should not celebrate too strongly.

Secondly, we have to remember that we have a debt of approximately \$5.4 trillion, approximately \$20,000 for every man, woman and child in this country. Indeed, it is heartwarming to learn that under one theory of calculating the budget, we have a surplus of \$8 billion. But, remember, this is little more than about \$17 for each man, woman and child that we can take off of that \$20,000 debt.

So, again, we have a long ways to go. In fact, if you look at the years over which this surplus has been projected, we would probably not be able to reduce that debt by as much as even \$1,000. So we have a ways to go in terms of making a dent in this vast national debt.

A third reason that we should not celebrate too strongly is that we have obligations that we have incurred in the operation of the Social Security program and the Medicare program that are not funded. The unfunded liabilities of those two programs are conservatively estimated to be at least \$3 trillion and \$9 trillion respectively. That is a total of at least \$12 trillion, or approximately two and a half times the current national debt.

We have a great deal to do in reforming and revising the Social Security and Medicare programs, improving their funding, to make sure that this \$9 trillion or \$3 trillion unfunded liability in those respective programs does not hit us squarely between the eyes or our children and grandchildren between the eyes 30, 40, 50 years from now.

So, although we should tarry and recognize the significance of this accomplishment, of having at least a \$8 billion surplus in terms of historic calculations, we should not be exuberant. In fact, I do not even think we should crack out the champagne. We could probably celebrate with a near beer and enjoy the fizz, but remain sober and committed to yet attacking with renewed vigor the problems that lie ahead in making sure that our financial fiscal house is in order in this country, and making sure that this country has a financial condition that we are proud to leave as a legacy to our children and grandchildren.

We should not allow the partisanship that has unfortunately divided us on all too many occasions to overcome our commitment to doing the right

thing by the next generation in the years to come.

THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE BY THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a subject that is on the minds of all Americans, the pursuit of justice by the Independent Counsel.

In recent weeks, we have seen the personal character and motives of Kenneth Starr subjected to an unprecedented number of insults and attacks by friends of the President, attacks which are designed to delay justice and shift focus away from the truth.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, these attacks only tarnish our system of law in America. Our criminal justice system was designed to operate outside the political arena. It was intended that officers of the court would seek justice based on the presentation of the facts and the determination of whether conduct based on these facts was unlawful or not.

The search for truth and determination of the facts has sadly become an indictment by political operatives of the Independent Counsel and his office. Diverting attention from the facts of this case does not serve justice, it simply demeans the Presidency.

Mr. Speaker, Congress passed the Independent Counsel statute in response to the Watergate experience of 1974, assuring that an independently appointed court official would best be able to seek justice involving allegations against high government officials. Moving the prosecution process outside the White House best assures that credible allegations of wrongdoing against such officials will not go unchecked. It is certainly not in our national interests for a President to investigate himself.

The history of the Independent Counsel statute is interesting. Congress reauthorized it three times. President Clinton himself signed the reauthorization legislation in 1994. Many Members of this Congress back in 1994 voted for such reauthorization.

Under the law, the Independent Counsel is given the same investigative authority as the Department of Justice. The authority includes conducting grand jury investigations, granting immunity to witnesses, and challenging in court any privilege claims or attempts to withhold evidence on national security grounds.

We must also understand, Mr. Speaker, that obtaining testimony by subpoena is an important investigative tool to determine the facts of allegations of wrongdoing by the President. Without facts, neither truth nor justice can be preserved.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General appointed Mr. Starr through a judicial

panel and maintains full authority to remove the Independent Counsel. Mr. Starr was not appointed because he was without integrity; he was appointed because he is a fine lawyer, possessed of substantial legal skills and experience, and respected for his character and honesty.

If President Clinton genuinely believes Mr. Starr has acted beyond authority, the Attorney General may remove him for cause and appoint a different Independent Counsel. The power to do so resides in this President.

If the President believes the insults that his spokesmen level at Mr. Starr, then the President should seek removal. If he does not agree with those insults, the President should instruct his defenders to stop their public criticism, criticism that is not designed to learn the truth, but to deflect it and bring contempt on our justice system.

With international challenges facing our country, the public needs reassurance that our highest national leader is truthful, that his representations to us are reliable, that we can trust his word on matters of national security, that he is an honorable representative for all Americans. Under the circumstances, the President's sacred honor is in question. All the criticisms against the Independent Counsel by political operatives of the President do not change that at all. Their criticisms serve not the best interests of the country nor the one standard that Americans support most, the truth.

Mr. Speaker, all Americans need to know that our President is honorable. Seeking the truth should not just be another political campaign. Assaulting our legal system and the officers of the court who administer it, who serve under it, may have temporary political benefit. Public opinion polls ebb and flow, but the long-term damage is more lasting. Public distrust of our legal system, the system in which we want our citizens to have faith, will result from a contradiction of the noble American principle that we are a country of laws, not men. That rule of law and justice is of paramount importance to a civil society. No person, no matter how popular, is above the law.

Mr. Speaker, we should all take a careful look at the phenomenon unfolding before us, the gaming of our justice system, where criticizing legal authority is the defense weapon of choice, where putting a proper spin on the evidence is a substitute for being truthful and honest and accepting the consequences.

□ 2230

Free societies governed by laws fairly administered can prevail over political tyranny only if citizens have faith in and respect for authorities charged with enforcing the laws. Law is the embodiment of the moral sentiment of the people. The laws of our country are the most perfect branch of ethics. Laws should be like death, which spares no one. It has been said that every viola-

tion of truth is a stab at the heart of human society.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, our society, our country, needs the truth in this instance. To people of integrity, there would be no conversation so agreeable as that of a man, be he the President or the independent counsel, who has no intention to deceive. The withholding of truth can be a worse deception than a direct misstatement. Searching for the truth is the noblest occupation of mankind. Obscuring it is a curse on our society that will damage our institutions of government and our national spirit for years to come.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PITTS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXPLAINING THE ATTITUDES, CONCERNS, AND BELIEFS OF OUR CONSTITUENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFER) is recognized for half of the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BOB SCHAFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, tonight I am joined by some of my colleagues from the freshman Republican class, which includes individuals who were elected in 1996 and were sworn in at the beginning of 1997. This class is one that has come to this microphone often during special orders to talk about the agendas that we have set forward and that we are fighting to promote here in Congress, but more recently, we have had the opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time back at home in our respective districts, holding and conducting a number of town meetings and visiting with constituents and speaking about the issues that are taking place here, and describing our activities to our constituents.

So tonight our focus is primarily to report back to the Congress and to our colleagues about those things we have heard from our constituents, and to in fact explain the attitudes and opinions and beliefs of those constituents to the rest of the House.

With that in mind I am joined tonight by the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) and also the gentleman from great State of Minnesota, Mr. ROY BLUNT, is here. We may be joined by another gentleman from the State of Michigan, who has suggested he may join us tonight. I just wanted to have a general discussion with the Members here, and yield time back and forth and talk about the things we have heard.

As for me, conducting several town meetings and visiting throughout the country, throughout the district, rath-

er, the concern for the key issue in the country of the national debt seemed to be first and foremost on people's minds, at about \$5.5 trillion. That debt, when divided by the number of citizens in the country, comes to about \$20,000 per man, woman, and child.

People are quite concerned about providing some real relief with that debt. People are encouraged by the news that we have heard and the reports that the economy has done so well and has allowed the American taxpayers to catch up with the spending of Congress, so we anticipate a budget surplus; that is to suggest that the debt may be eliminated, and that is, again, according to the way the government does its accounting. But the real question is what to do with a surplus if one is found to exist.

What I am hearing for the most part is that people would like to see us find some strategy to retire that debt, either pay it off directly, to try to find a way to relieve the tax burden on the American people in a way that allows them to be more productive, and generate more revenue to the Federal Government through tax relief, and a number of other strategies that have been suggested to me.

People would still like to see us move forward on our goals to provide further tax relief, to rein in the abuses at the IRS, and to begin treating taxpayers as though we are innocent until the IRS proves we might be guilty, rather than the other way around, as the burden is unfairly placed on taxpayers today when there is some question over tax obligation and liability.

Education was the third key issue that I had heard back in my district. We have had a lot of discussion about the government trying to usurp an independent national testing strategy that we have today, with independent operations that provide national benchmarks for our schools. The Clinton administration, as we know, has been trying to establish a national testing procedure through the U.S. Department of Education in a government-owned sort of fashion.

Many people in my district, in fact most people who are familiar with the proposal, have flatly rejected it and believe that we ought to defer authority back to our States and really focus on the freedom to teach and liberty to learn at the most local level. So that is a general sense of the key issues that have been raised in my town meetings.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) to tell us what he has been hearing.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado for yielding to me.

I would say that there has been a lot of talk lately about how great the economy is doing, and just yesterday the Congressional Budget Office announced that we actually have an \$8 billion Federal surplus in 1998. I think that is remarkable when we think about where we have come from, starting when our side took a poll of the